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Laidig

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(54) **DATA TUNING FOR FAST COMPUTATION AND POLYGONAL MANIPULATION SIMPLIFICATION**

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G06T 9/20	(2006.01)
G03F 7/20	(2006.01)
G06T 17/20	(2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC ***G06T 1/20*** (2013.01); ***G03F 7/70*** (2013.01); ***G03F 7/70058*** (2013.01); ***G03F 7/70216*** (2013.01); ***G03F 7/70275*** (2013.01); ***G03F 7/70283*** (2013.01); ***G03F 7/70291*** (2013.01); ***G03F 7/70508*** (2013.01); ***G06T 7/64*** (2017.01); ***G06T 7/70*** (2017.01); ***G06T 11/203*** (2013.01); ***G06T 11/40*** (2013.01); *G03F 7/70008* (2013.01); *G03F 7/70075* (2013.01); *G03F 7/70091* (2013.01); *G03F 7/70125* (2013.01); *G06T 9/20* (2013.01); *G06T 17/20* (2013.01)

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC G06T 1/20; G06T 7/64; G06T 7/70; G06T 11/40; G06T 11/203; G06T 17/20; G06T 9/20; G03F 7/70; G03F 7/70008; G03F 7/70058; G03F 7/70075; G03F 7/70091; G03F 7/70125; G03F 7/70216; G03F 7/70275; G03F 7/70283; G03F 7/70291; G03F 7/70508

See application file for complete search history.

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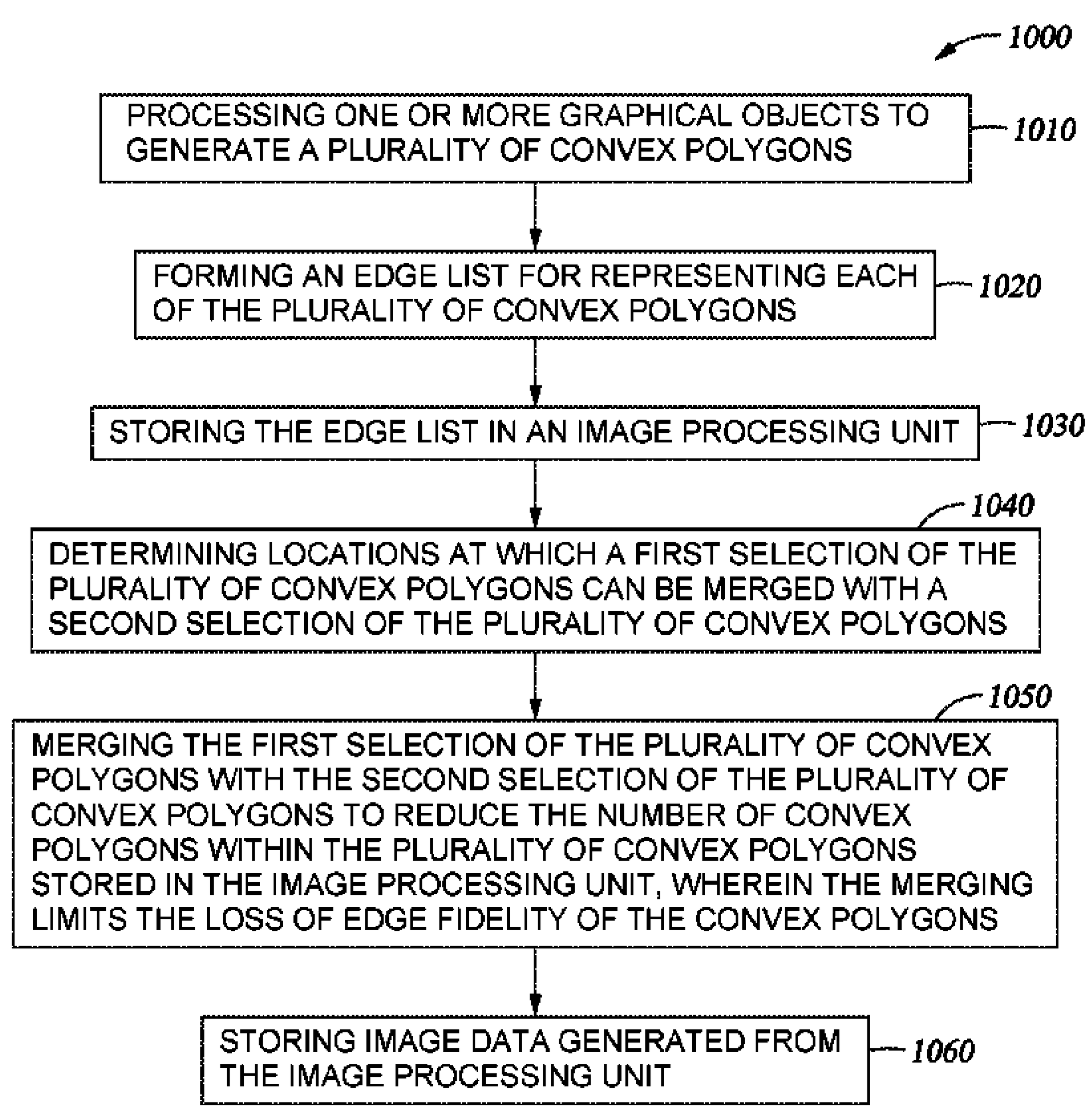
(57) **ABSTRACT**

A data tuning software application platform relating to the ability to apply maskless lithography patterns to a substrate in a manufacturing process is disclosed in which the application processes graphical objects and configures the graphical objects for partition into a plurality of trapezoids. The trapezoids may be selectively merged in order to minimize the trapezoid count while limiting the loss of edge fidelity.

21 Claims, 10 Drawing Sheets



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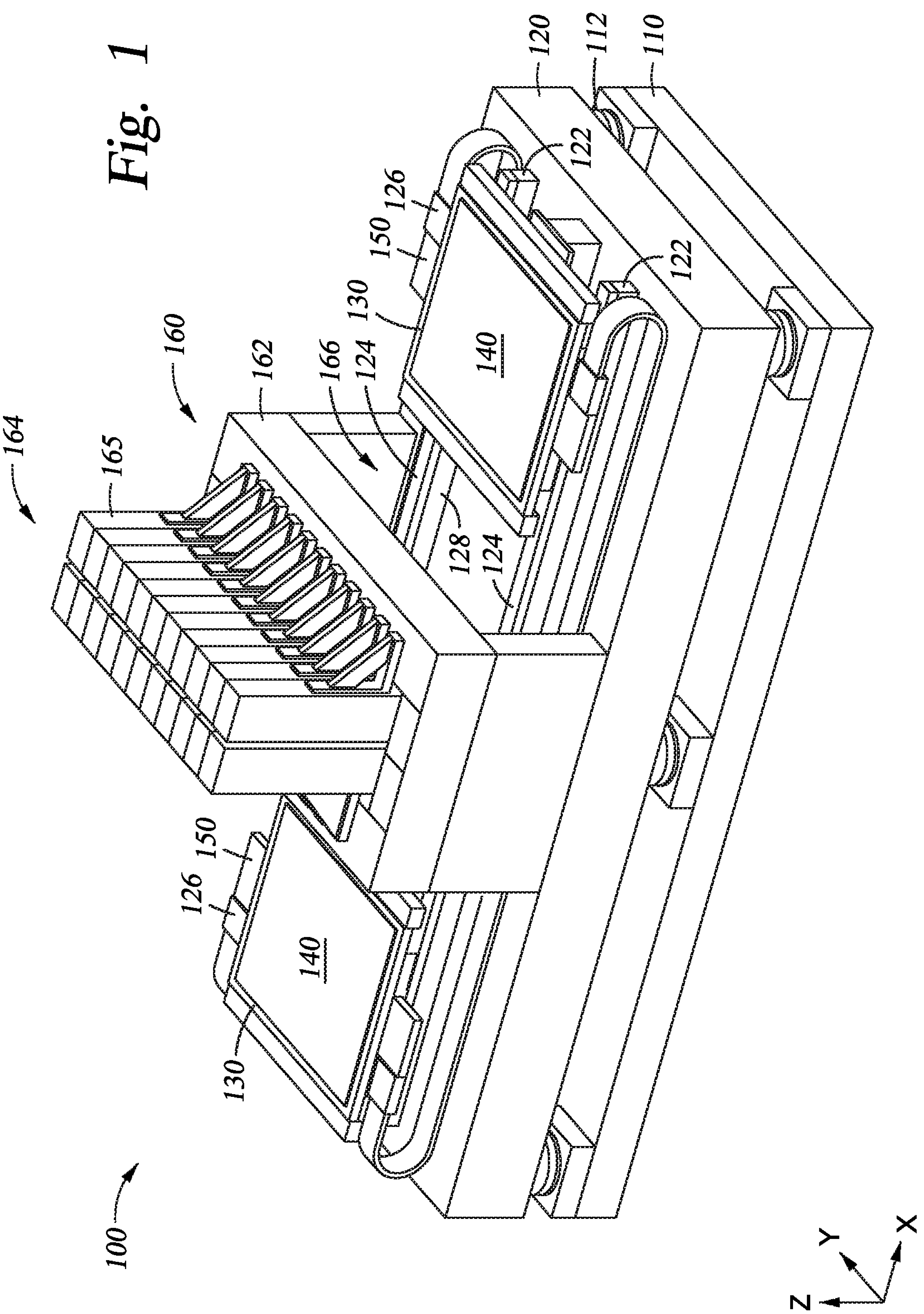

100
110
112
120
122
122
124
124
126
126
128
130
130
140
140
150
150
160
162
164
165
166
X
Y
Z

Fig. 1

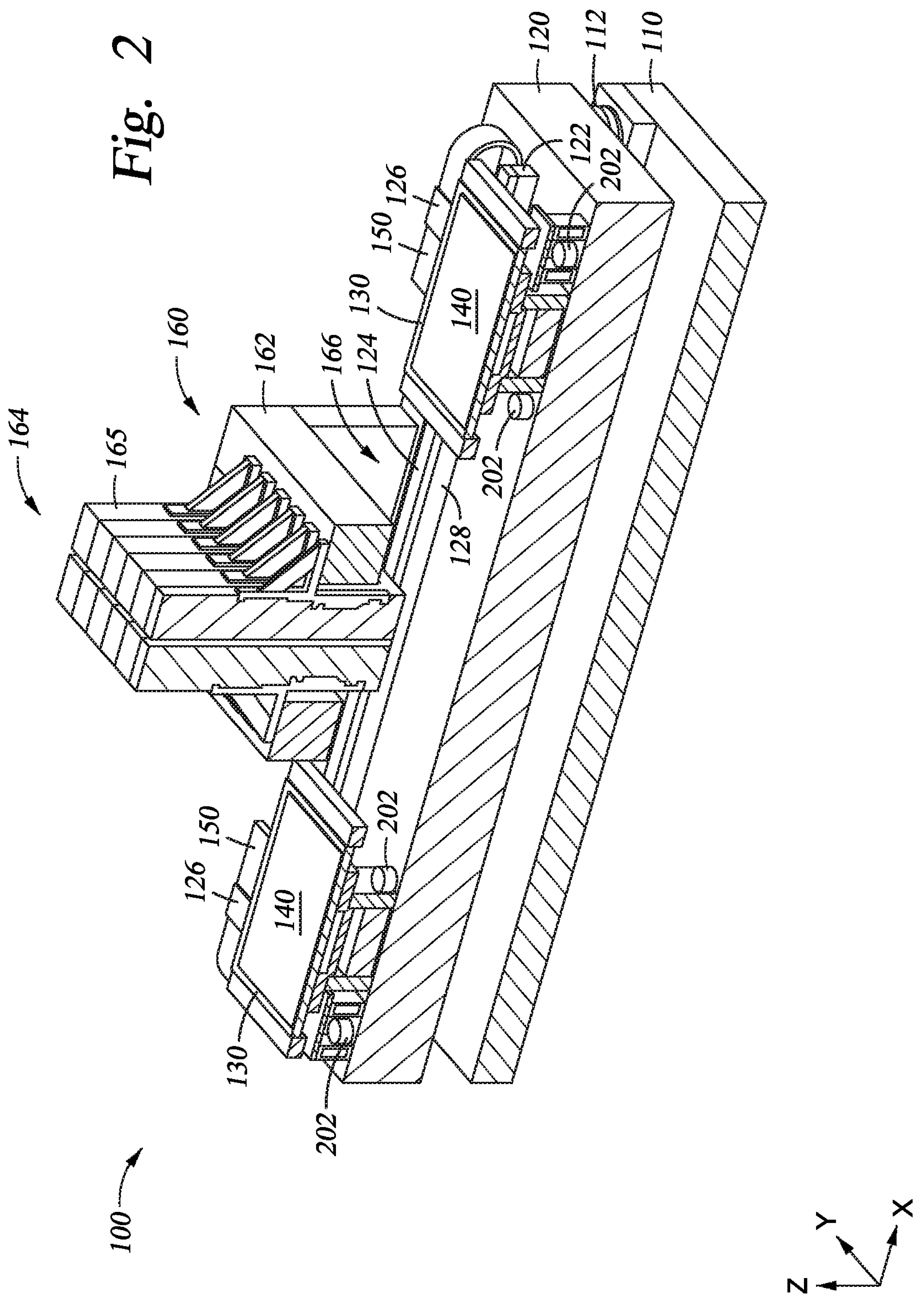

100
110
112
120
122
124
126
128
130
140
150
160
162
164
165
166
202
X
Y
Z

Fig. 2

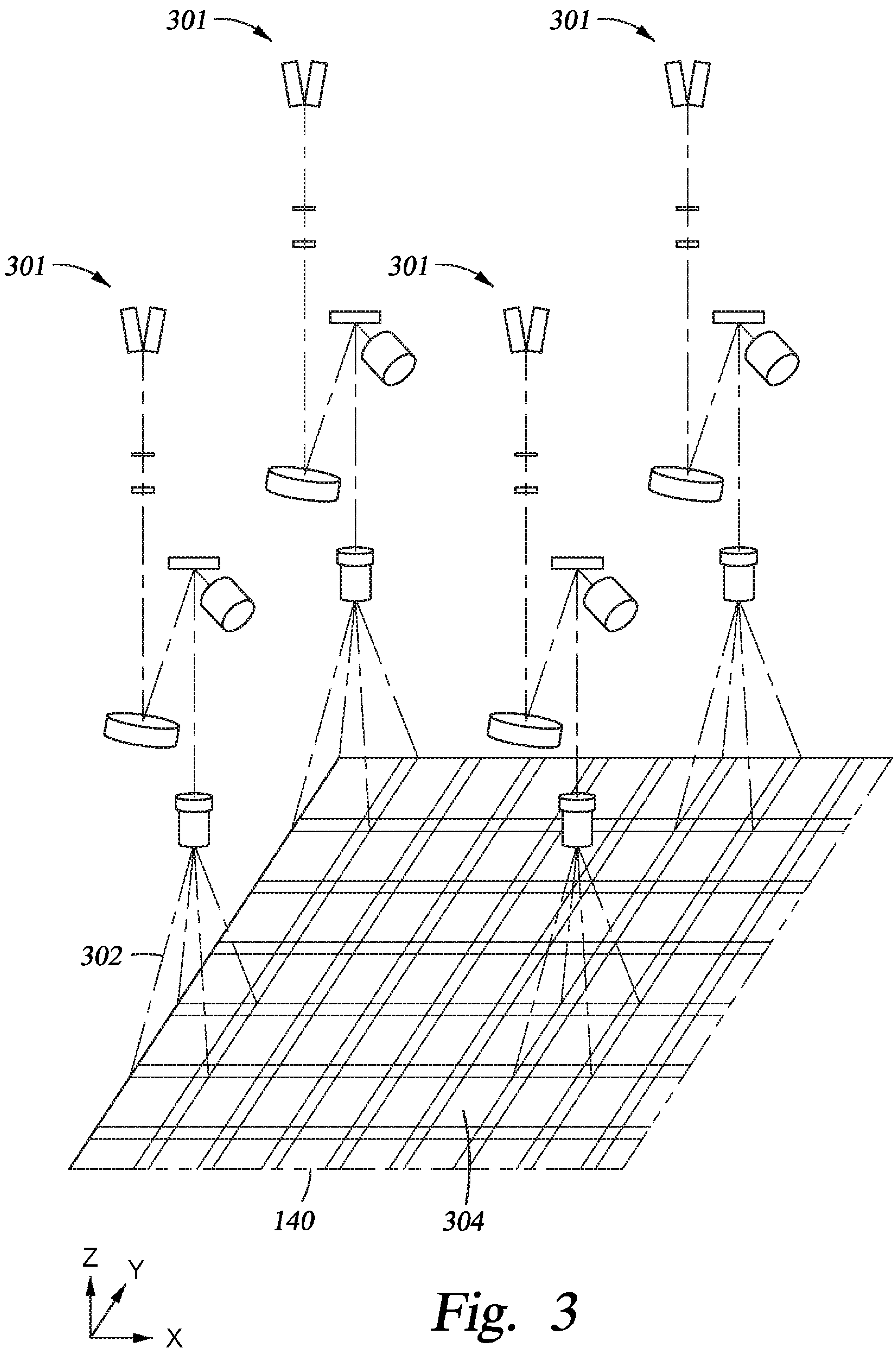


Fig. 3

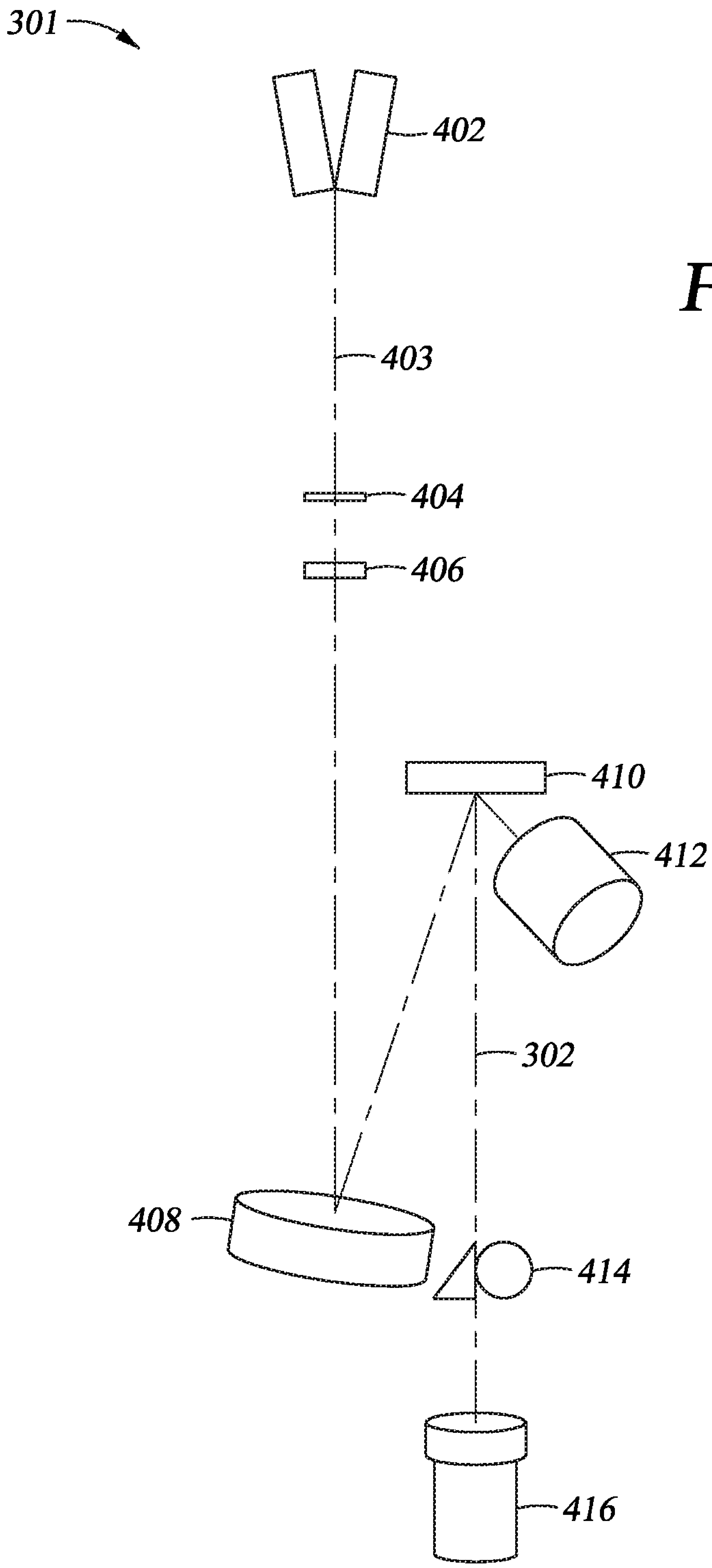


Fig. 4

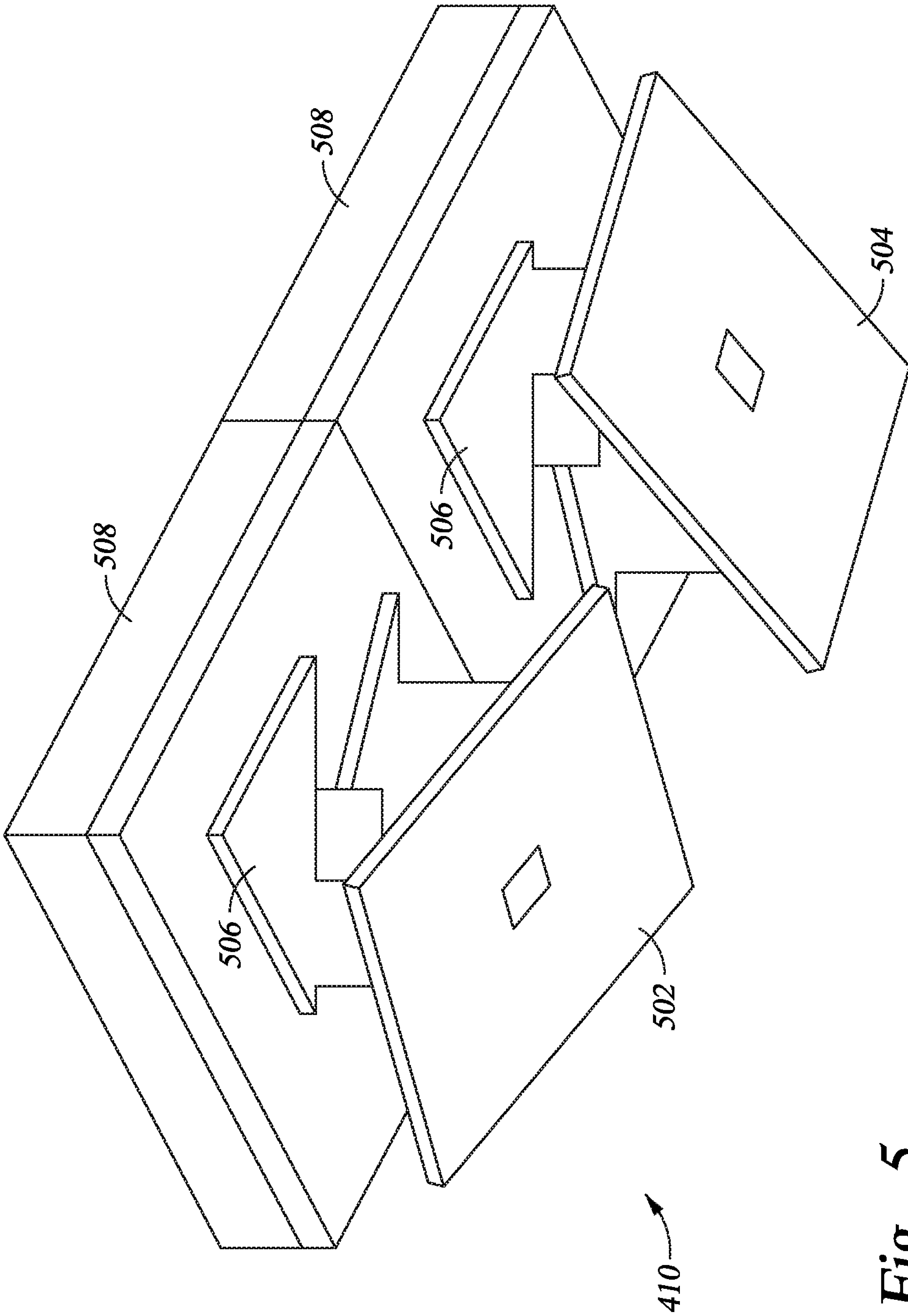
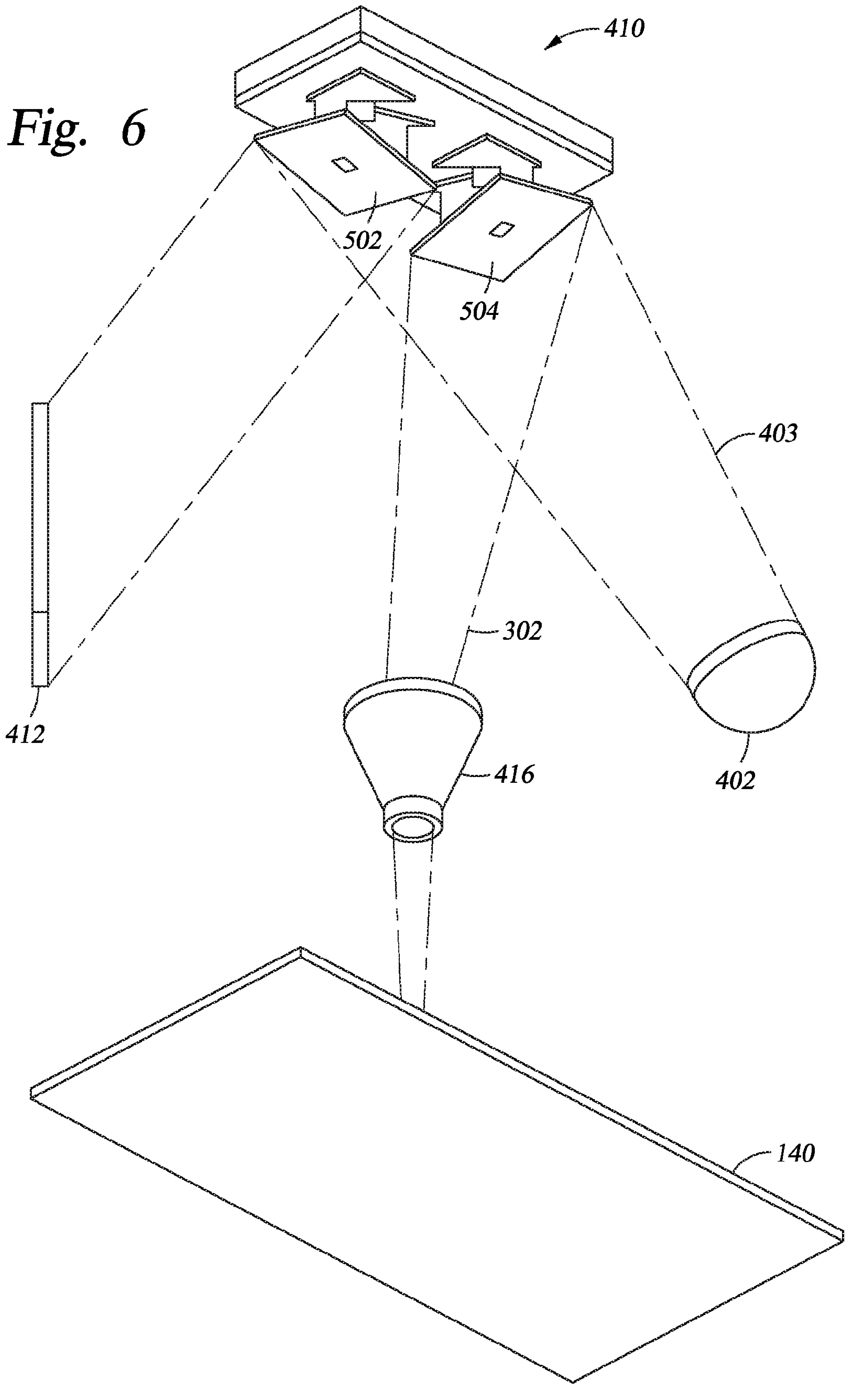


Fig. 5

Fig. 6



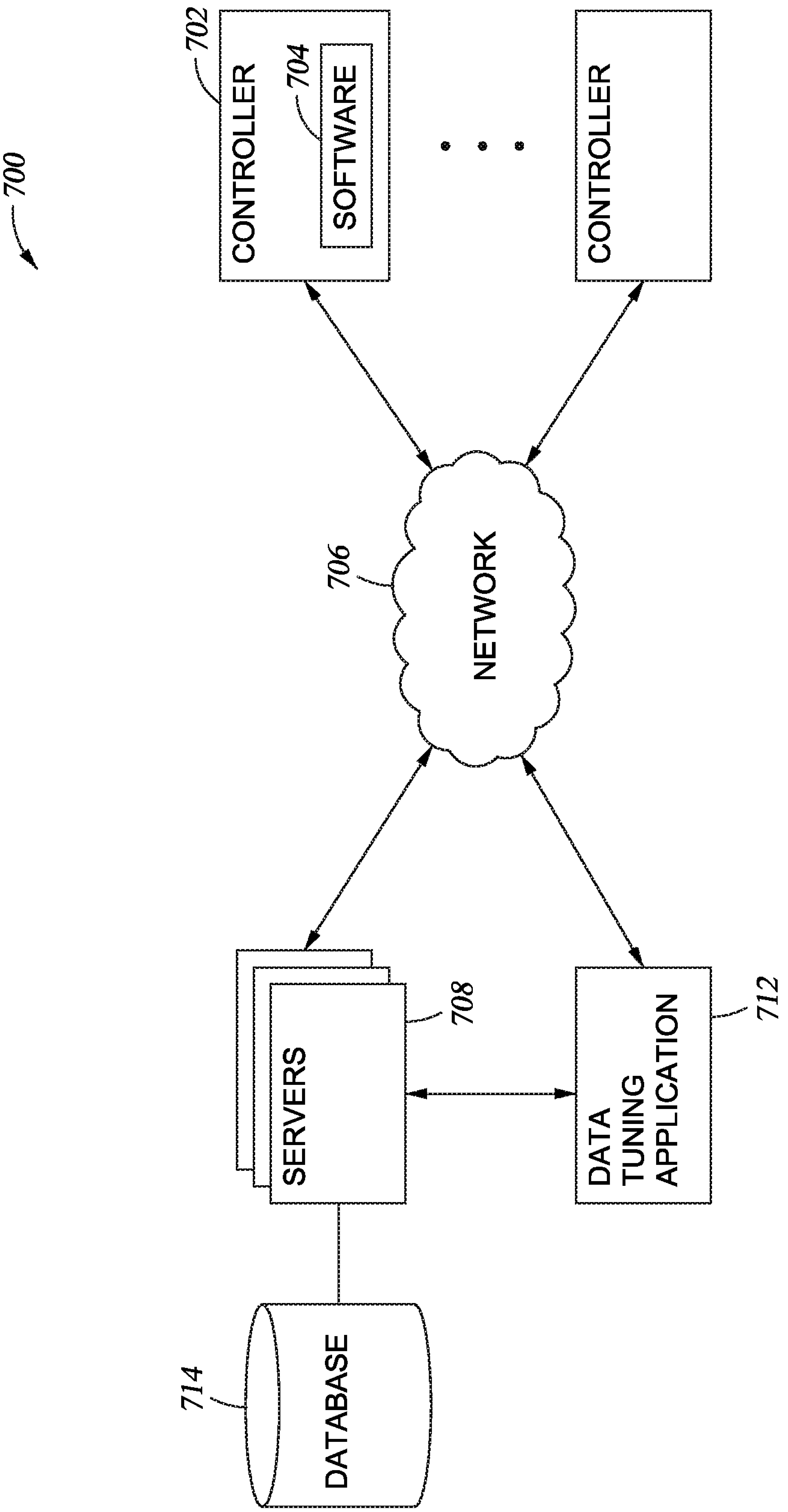

700
702
CONTROLLER
704
SOFTWARE
CONTROLLER
706
NETWORK
708
SERVERS
712
DATA TUNING APPLICATION
714
DATABASE

Fig. 7

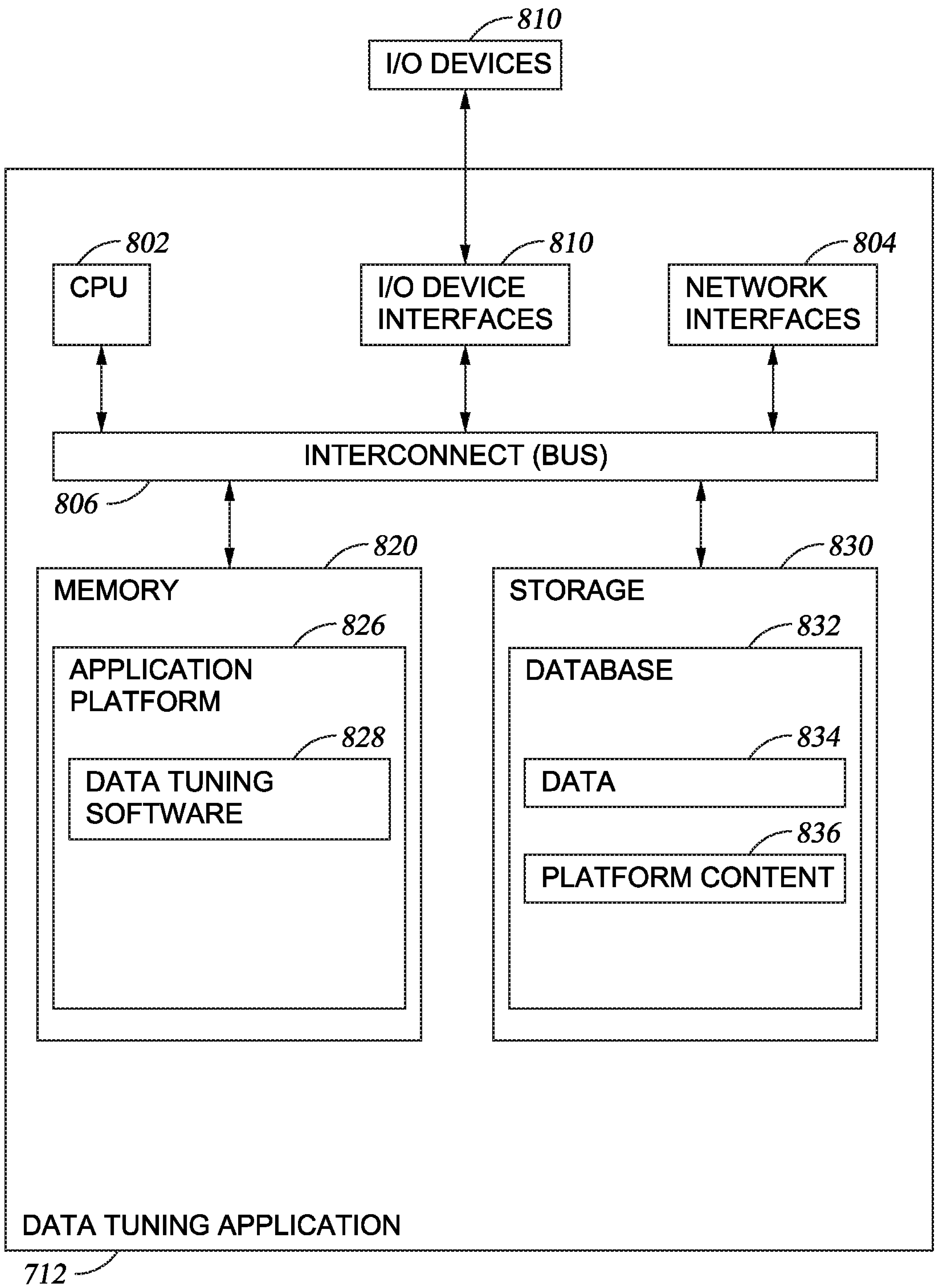
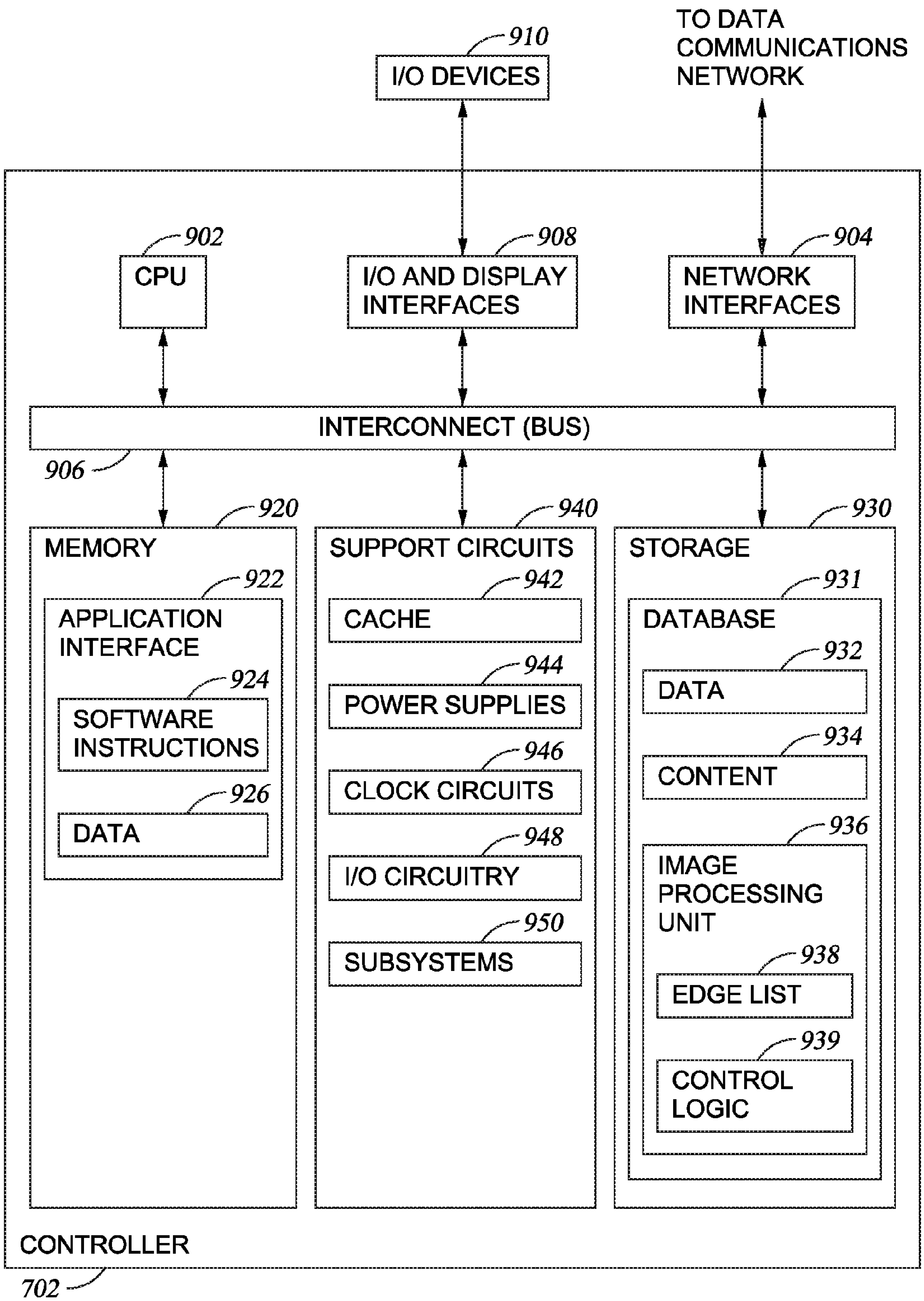

810
I/O DEVICES
802
CPU
810
I/O DEVICE INTERFACES
804
NETWORK INTERFACES
INTERCONNECT (BUS)
806
820
MEMORY
826
APPLICATION PLATFORM
828
DATA TUNING SOFTWARE
830
STORAGE
832
DATABASE
834
DATA
836
PLATFORM CONTENT
DATA TUNING APPLICATION
712

Fig. 8



910
I/O DEVICES
TO DATA COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK
902
CPU
908
I/O AND DISPLAY INTERFACES
904
NETWORK INTERFACES
INTERCONNECT (BUS)
906
920
MEMORY
922
APPLICATION INTERFACE
924
SOFTWARE INSTRUCTIONS
926
DATA
940
SUPPORT CIRCUITS
942
CACHE
944
POWER SUPPLIES
946
CLOCK CIRCUITS
948
I/O CIRCUITRY
950
SUBSYSTEMS
930
STORAGE
931
DATABASE
932
DATA
934
CONTENT
936
IMAGE PROCESSING UNIT
938
EDGE LIST
939
CONTROL LOGIC
CONTROLLER
702

Fig. 9

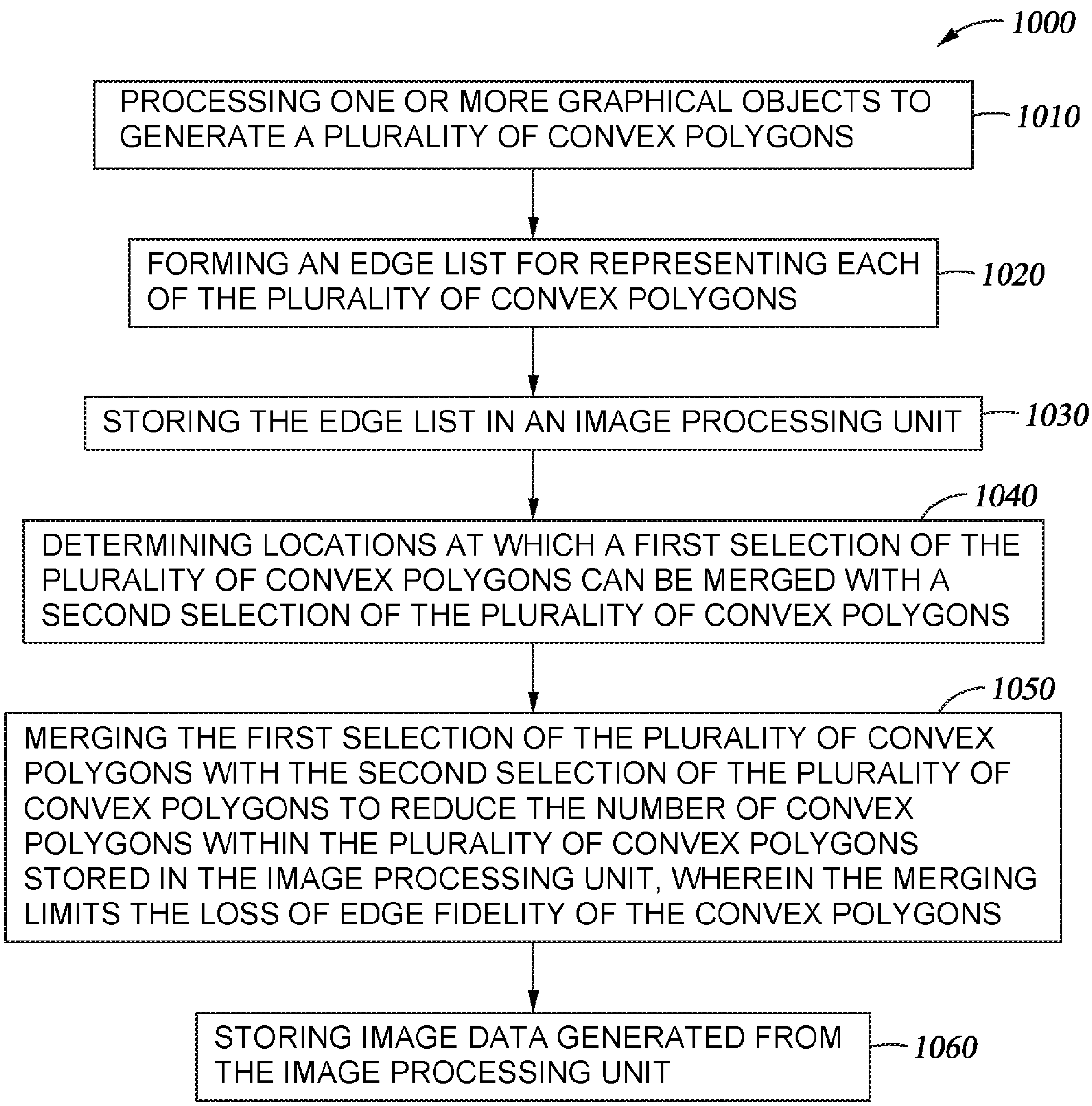

1000
PROCESSING ONE OR MORE GRAPHICAL OBJECTS TO GENERATE A PLURALITY OF CONVEX POLYGONS
1010
FORMING AN EDGE LIST FOR REPRESENTING EACH OF THE PLURALITY OF CONVEX POLYGONS
1020
STORING THE EDGE LIST IN AN IMAGE PROCESSING UNIT
1030
DETERMINING LOCATIONS AT WHICH A FIRST SELECTION OF THE PLURALITY OF CONVEX POLYGONS CAN BE MERGED WITH A SECOND SELECTION OF THE PLURALITY OF CONVEX POLYGONS
1040
MERGING THE FIRST SELECTION OF THE PLURALITY OF CONVEX POLYGONS WITH THE SECOND SELECTION OF THE PLURALITY OF CONVEX POLYGONS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF CONVEX POLYGONS WITHIN THE PLURALITY OF CONVEX POLYGONS STORED IN THE IMAGE PROCESSING UNIT, WHEREIN THE MERGING LIMITS THE LOSS OF EDGE FIDELITY OF THE CONVEX POLYGONS
1050
STORING IMAGE DATA GENERATED FROM THE IMAGE PROCESSING UNIT
1060

Fig. 10

DATA TUNING FOR FAST COMPUTATION AND POLYGONAL MANIPULATION SIMPLIFICATION

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application claims benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 62/137,782 filed Mar. 24, 2015, which is incorporated by reference herein.

BACKGROUND

Field

Embodiments of the present disclosure generally relate to the field of maskless lithography. More specifically, embodiments provided herein relate to a system and method for performing maskless digital lithography manufacturing processes.

Description of the Related Art

Photolithography is widely used in the manufacturing of semiconductor devices and display devices, such as liquid crystal displays (LCDs). Large area substrates are often utilized in the manufacture of LCDs. LCDs, or flat panels, are commonly used for active matrix displays, such as computers, touch panel devices, personal digital assistants (PDAs), cell phones, television monitors, and the like. Generally, flat panels may include a layer of liquid crystal material forming pixels sandwiched between two plates. When power from the power supply is applied across the liquid crystal material, an amount of light passing through the liquid crystal material may be controlled at pixel locations enabling images to be generated.

Microlithography techniques are generally employed to create electrical features incorporated as part of the liquid crystal material layer forming the pixels. According to this technique, a light-sensitive photoresist is typically applied to at least one surface of the substrate. Then, a pattern generator exposes selected areas of the light-sensitive photoresist as part of a pattern with light to cause chemical changes to the photoresist in the selective areas to prepare these selective areas for subsequent material removal and/or material addition processes to create the electrical features.

In order to continue to provide display devices and other devices to consumers at the prices demanded by consumers, new apparatuses, approaches, and systems are needed to precisely and cost-effectively create patterns on substrates, such as large area substrates.

As the foregoing illustrates, there is a need for an improved technique for data tuning for fast computation and polygonal manipulation simplification within digital lithography. More specifically, what is needed in the art is a data tuning application which selectively merges convex polygons to minimize the polygon count while limiting the loss of edge fidelity.

SUMMARY

The present disclosure generally relates to a data tuning software application platform which maintains the ability to apply maskless lithography patterns to a substrate in a manufacturing process. The application processes graphical objects and configures the graphical objects for partition into a plurality of trapezoids. The trapezoids may be selectively merged in order to minimize the trapezoid count while limiting the loss of edge fidelity. In one embodiment, a method for tuning data for parallel image processing is disclosed. The method includes processing one or more graphical objects to generate a plurality of convex polygons, forming an edge list for representing each of the plurality of convex polygons, and storing the edge list in an image processing unit. The method further includes determining locations at which a first selection of the plurality of convex polygons can be merged with a second selection of the plurality of convex polygons, merging a first selection of the plurality of convex polygons with a second selection of the plurality of convex polygons to reduce the number of convex polygons within the plurality of convex polygons stored in the image processing unit, wherein the merging limits the loss of edge fidelity of the convex polygons, and storing image data generated from the image processing unit.

In another embodiment, a computer system for performing data tuning for parallel image processing is disclosed. The computer system for performing parallel image processing may include a processor and a memory storing instructions that, when executed by the processor, cause the computer system to process one or more graphical objects to generate a plurality of convex polygons, form an edge list for representing each of the plurality of convex polygons, and store the edge list in an image processing unit. The memory may also store instructions that, when executed by the processor, cause the computer system to determine locations at which a first selection of the plurality of convex polygons can be merged with a second selection of the plurality of convex polygons, merge a first selection of the plurality of convex polygons with a second selection of the plurality of convex polygons to reduce the number of convex polygons within the plurality of convex polygons stored in the image processing unit, wherein the merging limits the loss of edge fidelity of the convex polygons, and store image data generated from the image processing unit.

In yet another embodiment, a non-transitory computer-readable medium, storing instructions that, when executed by a processor, cause a computer system to tune data for parallel image processing is disclosed. The processor may perform the steps of processing one or more graphical objects to generate a plurality of convex polygons, forming an edge list for representing each of the plurality of convex polygons, and storing the edge list in an image processing unit. The processor may also perform the steps of determining locations at which a first selection of the plurality of convex polygons can be merged with a second selection of the plurality of convex polygons, merging a first selection of the plurality of convex polygons with a second selection of the plurality of convex polygons to reduce the number of convex polygons within the plurality of convex polygons stored in the image processing unit, wherein the merging limits the loss of edge fidelity of the convex polygons, and storing image data generated from the image processing unit.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

So that the manner in which the above recited features of the present disclosure can be understood in detail, a more particular description of the disclosure, briefly summarized above, may be had by reference to embodiments, some of which are illustrated in the appended drawings. It is to be noted, however, that the appended drawings illustrate only exemplary embodiments of this disclosure and are therefore not to be considered limiting of its scope, for the disclosure may be applied to other equally effective embodiments.

FIG. **1** is a perspective view of a system that may benefit from embodiments disclosed herein.

FIG. **2** is a cross-sectional side view of the system of FIG. **1** according to one embodiment.

FIG. **3** is a perspective schematic view of a plurality of image projection systems according to one embodiment.

FIG. **4** is a perspective schematic view of an image projection system of the plurality of image projection devices of FIG. **3** according to one embodiment.

FIG. **5** is an enlarged perspective view of two mirrors of a DMD according to one embodiment.

FIG. **6** schematically illustrates a beam being reflected by the two mirrors of the DMD of FIG. **5** according to one embodiment.

FIG. **7** illustrates a computer system for providing a data tuning application for fast computation and polygonal manipulation simplification according to one embodiment described herein.

FIG. **8** illustrates a more detailed view of a server of FIG. **7** according to one embodiment described herein.

FIG. **9** illustrates a controller computing system used to access a data tuning application for fast computation and polygonal manipulation simplification according to one embodiment described herein.

FIG. **10** schematically illustrates operations of a method for tuning data for parallel image processing according to one embodiment described herein.

To facilitate understanding, identical reference numerals have been used, where possible, to designate identical elements that are common to the figures. It is contemplated that elements and features of one embodiment may be beneficially incorporated in other embodiments without further recitation.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Embodiments described herein generally relate to a data tuning software application platform which maintains the ability to apply maskless lithography patterns to a substrate in a manufacturing process. The application processes graphical objects and configures the graphical objects for partition into a plurality of trapezoids. Furthermore, the trapezoids may be selectively merged in order to minimize the trapezoid count while limiting the loss of edge fidelity.

The term "user" as used herein includes, for example, a person or entity that owns a computing device or wireless device; a person or entity that operates or utilizes a computing device or a wireless device; or a person or entity that is otherwise associated with a computing device or a wireless device. It is contemplated that the term "user" is not intended to be limiting and may include various examples beyond those described.

FIG. **1** is a perspective view of a system **100** that may benefit from embodiments disclosed herein. The system **100** includes a base frame **110**, a slab **120**, two or more stages **130**, and a processing apparatus **160**. The base frame **110** may rest on the floor of a fabrication facility and may support the slab **120**. Passive air isolators **112** may be positioned between the base frame **110** and the slab **120**. The slab **120** may be a monolithic piece of granite, and the two or more stages **130** may be disposed on the slab **120**. A substrate **140** may be supported by each of the two or more stages **130**. A plurality of holes (not shown) may be formed in the stage **130** for allowing a plurality of lift pins (not shown) to extend therethrough. The lift pins may rise to an extended position to receive the substrate **140**, such as from a transfer robot (not shown). The transfer robot may position the substrate **140** on the lift pins, and the lift pins may thereafter gently lower the substrate **140** onto the stage **130**.

The substrate **140** may, for example, be made of quartz and be used as part of a flat panel display. In other embodiments, the substrate **140** may be made of other materials. In some embodiments, the substrate **140** may have a photoresist layer formed thereon. A photoresist is sensitive to radiation and may be a positive photoresist or a negative photoresist, meaning that portions of the photoresist exposed to radiation will be respectively soluble or insoluble to a photoresist developer applied to the photoresist after the pattern is written into the photoresist. The chemical composition of the photoresist determines whether the photoresist will be a positive photoresist or negative photoresist. For example, the photoresist may include at least one of diazonaphthoquinone, a phenol formaldehyde resin, poly(methyl methacrylate), poly(methyl glutarimide), and SU-8. In this manner, the pattern may be created on a surface of the substrate **140** to form the electronic circuitry.

The system **100** may further include a pair of supports **122** and a pair of tracks **124**. The pair of supports **122** may be disposed on the slab **120**, and the slab **120** and the pair of supports **122** may be a single piece of material. The pair of tracks **124** may be supported by the pair of the supports **122**, and the two or more stages **130** may move along the tracks **124** in the X-direction. In one embodiment, the pair of tracks **124** is a pair of parallel magnetic channels. As shown, each track **124** of the pair of tracks **124** is linear. In other embodiments, the track **124** may have a non-linear shape. An encoder **126** may be coupled to each stage **130** in order to provide location information to a controller **702** (See FIG. **9**).

The processing apparatus **160** may include a support **162** and a processing unit **164**. The support **162** may be disposed on the slab **120** and may include an opening **166** for the two or more stages **130** to pass under the processing unit **164**. The processing unit **164** may be supported by the support **162**. In one embodiment, the processing unit **164** is a pattern generator configured to expose a photoresist in a photolithography process. In some embodiments, the pattern generator may be configured to perform a maskless lithography process. The processing unit **164** may include a plurality of image projection systems (shown in FIG. **3**) disposed in a case **165**. The processing apparatus **160** may be utilized to perform maskless direct patterning. During operation, one of the two or more stages **130** moves in the X-direction from a loading position, as shown in FIG. **1**, to a processing position. The processing position may refer to one or more positions of the stage **130** as the stage **130** passes under the processing unit **164**. During operation, the two or more stages **130** may be lifted by a plurality of air bearings **202** (shown in FIG. **2**) and may move along the pair of tracks **124** from the loading position to the processing position. A plurality of vertical guide air bearings (not shown) may be coupled to each stage **130** and positioned adjacent an inner wall **128** of each support **122** in order to stabilize the movement of the stage **130**. Each of the two or more stages **130** may also move in the Y-direction by moving along a track **150** for processing and/or indexing the substrate **140**.

FIG. **2** is a cross-sectional side view of the system **100** of FIG. **1** according to one embodiment. As shown, each stage **130** includes a plurality of air bearings **202** for lifting the stage **130**. Each stage **130** may also include a motor coil (not shown) for moving the stage **130** along the tracks **124**. The two or more stages **130** and the processing apparatus **160** may be enclosed by an enclosure (not shown) in order to provide temperature and pressure control.

FIG. **3** is a perspective schematic view of a plurality of image projection systems **301** according to one embodiment. As shown in FIG. **3**, each image projection system **301** produces a plurality of write beams **302** onto a surface **304** of the substrate **140**. As the substrate **140** moves in the X-direction and Y-direction, the entire surface **304** may be patterned by the write beams **302**. The number of the image projection systems **301** may vary based on the size of the substrate **140** and/or the speed of stage **130**. In one embodiment, there are **22** image projection systems **164** in the processing apparatus **160**.

FIG. **4** is a perspective schematic view of one image projection system **301** of the plurality of image projection systems **301** of FIG. **3** according to one embodiment. The image projection system **301** may include a light source **402**, an aperture **404**, a lens **406**, a mirror **408**, a DMD **410**, a light dump **412**, a camera **414**, and a projection lens **416**. The light source **402** may be a light emitting diode (LED) or a laser, and the light source **402** may be capable of producing a light having predetermined wavelength. In one embodiment, the predetermined wavelength is in the blue or near ultraviolet (UV) range, such as less than about 450 nm. The mirror **408** may be a spherical mirror. The projection lens **416** may be a 10× objective lens. The DMD **410** may include a plurality of mirrors, and the number of mirrors may correspond to the resolution of the projected image. In one embodiment, the DMD **410** includes 1920×1080 mirrors, which represent the number of pixels of a high definition television or other flat panel displays.

During operation, a beam **403** having a predetermined wavelength, such as a wavelength in the blue range, is produced by the light source **402**. The beam **403** is reflected to the DMD **410** by the mirror **408**. The DMD **410** includes a plurality of mirrors that may be controlled individually, and each mirror of the plurality of mirrors of the DMD **410** may be at “on” position or “off” position, based on the mask data provided to the DMD **410** by the controller (not shown). When the beam **403** reaches the mirrors of the DMD **410**, the mirrors that are at “on” position reflect the beam **403**, i.e., forming the plurality of write beams **302**, to the projection lens **416**. The projection lens **416** then projects the write beams **302** to the surface **304** of the substrate **140**. The mirrors that are at “off” position reflect the beam **403** to the light dump **412** instead of the surface **304** of the substrate **140**.

FIG. **5** is an enlarged perspective view of two mirrors **502**, **504** of the DMD **410** according to one embodiment. As shown, each mirror **502**, **504** is disposed on a tilting mechanism **506**, which is disposed on a memory cell **508**. The memory cell **508** may be a CMOS SRAM. During operation, each mirror **502**, **504** is controlled by loading the mask data into the memory cell. The mask data electrostatically controls the tilting of the mirror **502**, **504** in a binary fashion. When the mirror **502**, **504** is in a reset mode or without power applied, it may be set to a flat position, not corresponding to any binary number. Zero in binary may correspond to an “off” position, which means the mirror is tilted at −10 degrees, −12 degrees, or any other feasibly negative tilting degree. One in binary may correspond to an “on” position, which means the mirror is tilted at +10 degrees, +12 degrees, or any other feasibly positive tilting degree. As shown in FIG. **5**, the mirror **502** is at “off” position and the mirror **504** is at “on” position.

FIG. **6** schematically illustrates the beam **403** being reflected by the two mirrors **502**, **504** of the DMD **410** of FIG. **5** according to one embodiment. As shown, the mirror **502**, which is at “off” position, reflects the beam **403** generated from the light source **402** to the light dump **412**. The mirror **504**, which is at “on” position, forms the write beam **302** by reflecting the beam **403** to the projection lens **416**.

FIG. **7** illustrates a computing system **700** configured for providing a data tuning application for fast computation and polygonal manipulation simplification in which embodiments of the disclosure may be practiced. As shown, the computing system **700** may include a plurality of servers **708**, a data tuning application server **712**, and a plurality of controllers (i.e., computers, personal computers, mobile/wireless devices) **702** (only two of which are shown for clarity), each connected to a communications network **706** (for example, the Internet). The servers **708** may communicate with the database **714** via a local connection (for example, a Storage Area Network (SAN) or Network Attached Storage (NAS)) or over the Internet. The servers **708** are configured to either directly access data included in the database **714** or to interface with a database manager that is configured to manage data included within the database **714**.

Each controller **702** may include conventional components of a computing device, for example, a processor, system memory, a hard disk drive, a battery, input devices such as a mouse and a keyboard, and/or output devices such as a monitor or graphical user interface, and/or a combination input/output device such as a touchscreen which not only receives input but also displays output. Each server **708** and the data tuning application server **712** may include a processor and a system memory (not shown), and may be configured to manage content stored in database **714** using, for example, relational database software and/or a file system. The servers **708** may be programmed to communicate with one another, the controllers **702**, and the data tuning application server **712** using a network protocol such as, for example, the TCP/IP protocol. The data tuning application server **712** may communicate directly with the controllers **702** through the communications network **706**. The controllers **702** are programmed to execute software **704**, such as programs and/or other software applications, and access applications managed by servers **708**.

In the embodiments described below, users may respectively operate the controllers **702** that may be connected to the servers **708** over the communications network **706**. Pages, images, data, documents, and the like may be displayed to a user via the controllers **702**. Information and images may be displayed through a display device and/or a graphical user interface in communication with the controller **702**.

It is noted that the controller **702** may be a personal computer, laptop mobile computing device, smart phone, video game console, home digital media player, network-connected television, set top box, and/or other computing devices having components suitable for communicating with the communications network **706** and/or the applications or software. The controller **702** may also execute other software applications configured to receive content and information from the data tuning application **712**.

FIG. **8** illustrates a more detailed view of the data tuning application server **712** of FIG. **7**. The data tuning application server **712** includes, without limitation, a central processing unit (CPU) **802**, a network interface **804**, memory **820**, and storage **830** communicating via an interconnect **806**. The data tuning application server **712** may also include I/O device interfaces **808** connecting I/O devices **810** (for example, keyboard, video, mouse, audio, touchscreen, etc.). The data tuning application **712** may further include the network interface **804** configured to transmit data via the communications network **706**.

The CPU **802** retrieves and executes programming instructions stored in the memory **820** and generally controls and coordinates operations of other system components. Similarly, the CPU **802** stores and retrieves application data residing in the memory **820**. The CPU **802** is included to be representative of a single CPU, multiple CPU's, a single CPU having multiple processing cores, and the like. The interconnect **806** is used to transmit programming instructions and application data between the CPU **802**, I/O device interfaces **808**, storage **830**, network interfaces **804**, and memory **820**.

The memory **820** is generally included to be representative of a random access memory and, in operation, stores software applications and data for use by the CPU **802**. Although shown as a single unit, the storage **830** may be a combination of fixed and/or removable storage devices, such as fixed disk drives, floppy disk drives, hard disk drives, flash memory storage drives, tape drives, removable memory cards, CD-ROM, DVD-ROM, Blu-Ray, HD-DVD, optical storage, network attached storage (NAS), cloud storage, or a storage area-network (SAN) configured to store non-volatile data.

The memory **820** may store instructions and logic for executing an application platform **826** which may include data tuning software **828**. The storage **830** may include a database **832** configured to store data **834** and associated application platform content **836**. The database **832** may be any type of storage device.

Network computers are another type of computer system that can be used in conjunction with the disclosures provided herein. Network computers do not usually include a hard disk or other mass storage, and the executable programs are loaded from a network connection into the memory **820** for execution by the CPU **802**. A typical computer system will usually include at least a processor, memory, and an interconnect coupling the memory to the processor.

FIG. **9** illustrates a controller **702** used to access the data tuning application **712** and retrieve or display data associated with the application platform **826**. The controller **702** may include, without limitation, a central processing unit (CPU) **902**, a network interface **904**, an interconnect **906**, a memory **920**, storage **930**, and support circuits **940**. The controller **702** may also include an I/O device interface **908** connecting I/O devices **910** (for example, keyboard, display, touchscreen, and mouse devices) to the controller **702**.

Like CPU **802**, CPU **902** is included to be representative of a single CPU, multiple CPU's, a single CPU having multiple processing cores, etc., and the memory **920** is generally included to be representative of a random access memory. The interconnect **906** may be used to transmit programming instructions and application data between the CPU **902**, I/O device interfaces **908**, storage **930**, network interface **904**, and memory **920**. The network interface **904** may be configured to transmit data via the communications network **706**, for example, to transfer content from the data tuning application server **712**. Storage **930**, such as a hard disk drive or solid-state storage drive (SSD), may store non-volatile data. The storage **930** may contain a database **931**. The database **931** may contain data **932** and other content **934**. Illustratively, the memory **920** may include an application interface **922**, which itself may display software instructions **924**, and/or store or display data **926**. The application interface **922** may provide one or more software applications which allow the controller to access data and other content hosted by the data tuning application server **712**.

As shown in FIG. **9**, the system **100** includes a controller **702**. The controller **702** is generally designed to facilitate the control and automation of the processing techniques described herein. The controller **702** may be coupled to or in communication with one or more of the processing apparatus **160**, the stages **130**, and the encoder **126**. The processing apparatus **160** and the stages **130** may provide information to the controller **702** regarding the substrate processing and the substrate aligning. For example, the processing apparatus **160** may provide information to the controller **702** to alert the controller that substrate processing has been completed. The encoder **126** may provide location information to the controller **702**, and the location information is then used to control the stages **130** and the processing apparatus **160**.

The controller **702** may include a central processing unit (CPU) **902**, memory **920**, and support circuits **940** (or I/O **908**). The CPU **902** may be one of any form of computer processors that are used in industrial settings for controlling various processes and hardware (e.g., pattern generators, motors, and other hardware) and monitor the processes (e.g., processing time and substrate position). The memory **920**, as shown in FIG. **9**, is connected to the CPU **902**, and may be one or more of a readily available memory, such as random access memory (RAM), read only memory (ROM), floppy disk, hard disk, or any other form of digital storage, local or remote. Software instructions and data can be coded and stored within the memory for instructing the CPU **902**. The support circuits **940** are also connected to the CPU **902** for supporting the processor in a conventional manner. The support circuits **940** may include conventional cache **942**, power supplies **944**, clock circuits **946**, input/output circuitry **948**, subsystems **950**, and the like. A program (or computer instructions) readable by the controller **702** determines which tasks are performable on a substrate. The program may be software readable by the controller **702** and may include code to monitor and control, for example, the processing time and substrate position.

It should be borne in mind, however, that all of these and similar terms are to be associated with the appropriate physical quantities and are merely convenient labels applied to these quantities. Unless specifically stated otherwise as apparent from the following discussion, it is appreciated that throughout the description, discussions utilizing terms such as "processing" or "computing" or "calculating" or "determining" or "displaying" or the like, refer to the action and processes of a computer system, or similar electronic computing device, that manipulates and transforms data represented as physical (electronic) quantities within the computer system's registers and memories into other data similarly represented as physical quantities within the computer system memories or registers or other such information storage, transmission, or display devices.

The present example also relates to an apparatus for performing the operations herein. This apparatus may be specially constructed for the required purposes, or it may comprise a general purpose computer selectively activated or reconfigured by a computer program stored in the computer. Such a computer program may be stored in a computer readable storage medium, such as, but is not limited to, read-only memories (ROMs), random access memories (RAMs), EPROMs, EEPROMs, flash memory, magnetic or optical cards, any type of disk including floppy disks, optical disks, CD-ROMs, and magnetic-optical disks, or any type of media suitable for storing electronic instructions, and each coupled to a computer system interconnect.

The algorithms and displays presented herein are not inherently related to any particular computer or other apparatus. Various general purpose systems may be used with programs in accordance with the teachings herein, or it may prove convenient to construct a more specialized apparatus to perform the method operations. The structure for a variety of these systems will appear from the description above. In addition, the present examples are not described with reference to any particular programming language, and various examples may thus be implemented using a variety of programming languages.

As described in greater detail within, embodiments of the disclosure provide a software application through which graphical objects, such as convex polygons, such as trapezoids, may be selectively merged in order to minimize the graphical object count. Despite minimizing trapezoid count, the loss of edge fidelity is also limited.

In one embodiment, a method for tuning data for parallel image processing is disclosed. The method may be performed by a controller **702**, as shown in FIG. **9**. As discussed with reference to FIG. **3**, supra, each image projection system **301** produces a plurality of write beams **302** onto a surface **304** of the substrate **140**, and, as the substrate **140** moves in the X-direction and Y-direction, the entire surface **304** may be patterned by the write beams **302**. During patterning the controller may process one or more graphical objects of the surface **304** of the substrate **140**. The processing of the graphical objects may generate and/or partition the one or more graphical objects into a plurality of convex polygons. To facilitate parallel image processing acceleration, the polygons may be tessellated into convex polygons, such as trapezoids and/or triangles. The tessellation may occur along the scan direction. The trapezoids may be sorted by scan line, however, the order of the trapezoids may be arbitrary. A tessellation of the polygons to trapezoids, a lower level primitive, may simplify a second stage of the patterning process, rasterization.

The coordinates of the convex polygons may be used to form an edge list **938** for representing each of the plurality of convex polygons. The processing of the one or more graphical objects may also include the identification of transitions at the boundaries of the one or more graphical objects or convex polygons according to a scan direction of the DMD **410**.

The edge list **938** may be stored in an image processing unit **936** of the storage **930** of the controller **702**. The edge list **938** may be updated as further scans of the substrate **140** are completed. Scans may be completed by an optical unit or image projection system **301**. After storing the edge list **938**, the plurality of convex polygons, or a portion thereof, may be scanned according to a predetermined scan direction. The scanning may include scanning a portion of a convex polygon along a column. The scanning may further include scanning a portion of a convex polygon along a row. A first portion of the each of the plurality of convex polygons may be processed and analyzed. The analyzing may allow for the identification of merge locations with respect to the first portion of each of the plurality of convex polygons before merging occurs.

Locations at which the first selection of the plurality of convex polygons can be merged with a second selection of the plurality of convex polygons may further be determined. The image processing unit **936** may contain control logic **939** configured to selectively merge individual convex polygons. The control logic **939** of the image processing unit **936** may be configured to synchronize operations of the plurality of convex polygons. Merging the first selection of the plurality of convex polygons with the second selection of the plurality of convex polygons may occur to reduce the number of convex polygons within the plurality of convex polygons, as well as the number of convex polygons stored within the image processing unit **936**. Merging to reduce the number of convex polygons may ease the burden and/or balance the load with respect to the storage capabilities of the image processing unit **936**. Furthermore, the merging of the convex polygons may act to limit the loss of edge fidelity of the convex polygons. Limiting the loss of edge fidelity may preserve with a degree of exactness the edges and overall shape of edge lines as copied or reproduced with respect to the substrate **140**. The image projection system **301**, supra, may expose a substrate and deliver light to the surface of the substrate **140**. Each exposure may last approximately about 65 microseconds. During each exposure approximately 350,000 trapezoids may be generated and, therefore, processed. In order to limit the loss of edge fidelity, smaller trapezoids may be merged with larger or immediately connected trapezoids, thus easing the storage requirements of the controller **702**. The merging of trapezoids may create an error amount which may be compared against an acceptable error amount. The image data generated from the image processing unit **936** may further be stored in the image processing unit **936** or in another suitable storage facility.

In another embodiment, a computer system for performing data tuning for parallel image processing is disclosed. The computer system may comprise a processor and a memory. The memory may store instructions that, when executed by the processor, cause the computer system to process one or more graphical objects to generate a plurality of convex polygons. The processing of the graphical objects may generate and/or partition the one or more graphical objects into a plurality of convex polygons. To facilitate parallel image processing acceleration, the polygons may be tessellated into convex polygons, such as trapezoids and/or triangles. The tessellation may occur along the scan direction. The trapezoids may be sorted by scan line, however, the order of the trapezoids may be arbitrary. A tessellation of the polygons to trapezoids, a lower level primitive, may simplify a second stage of the patterning process, rasterization.

The coordinates of the convex polygons may be used to form an edge list **938** for representing each of the plurality of convex polygons. The processing of the one or more graphical objects may also include the identification of transitions at the boundaries of the one or more graphical objects or convex polygons according to a scan direction of the DMD **410**.

The memory may further store instructions that, when executed by the processor, cause the computer system to store the edge list **938** in an image processing unit **936**. The edge list **938** may be updated as further scans of the substrate **140** are completed. Scans may be completed by an optical unit or image projection system **301**. After storing the edge list **938**, the instructions may cause the computer system to scan, according to a predetermined scan direction, the plurality of convex polygons, or a portion thereof. The scanning may include scanning a portion of a convex polygon along a column. The scanning may further include scanning a portion of a convex polygon along a row. A first portion of the each of the plurality of convex polygons may be processed and analyzed. The analyzing may allow for the identification of merge locations with respect to the first portion of each of the plurality of convex polygons before merging occurs.

The instructions may further cause the computer system to determine locations at which the first selection of the plurality of convex polygons can be merged with a second selection of the plurality of convex polygons. The stored instructions may contain control logic **939** for the image processing unit **936** configured to selectively merge individual convex polygons. The control logic **939** of the image processing unit **936** may be configured to synchronize operations of the plurality of convex polygons. Merging the first selection of the plurality of convex polygons with the second selection of the plurality of convex polygons may occur to reduce the number of convex polygons within the plurality of convex polygons, as well as the number of convex polygons stored within the image processing unit **936**. Merging to reduce the number of convex polygons may ease the burden and/or balance the load with respect to the storage capabilities of the image processing unit **936** or other storage device. Furthermore, the merging of the convex polygons may act to limit the loss of edge fidelity of the convex polygons. Limiting the loss of edge fidelity may preserve with a degree of exactness the edges and overall shape of edge lines as copied or reproduced with respect to the substrate **140**. The image projection system **301**, supra, may expose a substrate and deliver light to the surface of the substrate **140**. Each exposure may last approximately about 65 microseconds. During each exposure approximately 350,000 trapezoids may be generated and, therefore, processed. In order to limit the loss of edge fidelity, smaller trapezoids may be merged with larger or immediately connected trapezoids, thus easing the storage requirements of the controller **702**. The merging of trapezoids may create an error amount which may be compared against an acceptable error amount. The image data generated from the image processing unit **936** may further be stored in the image processing unit **936** or in another suitable storage facility.

In yet another embodiment, a non-transitory computer-readable medium storing instructions that, when executed by a processor, cause a computer system to tune data for parallel image processing is disclosed. The non-transitory computer-readable medium may perform the steps of processing one or more graphical objects to generate a plurality of convex polygons. The processing of the graphical objects may generate and/or partition the one or more graphical objects into a plurality of convex polygons. To facilitate parallel image processing acceleration, the polygons may be tessellated into convex polygons, such as trapezoids and/or triangles. The tessellation may occur along the scan direction. The trapezoids may be sorted by scan line, however, the order of the trapezoids may be arbitrary. A tessellation of the polygons to trapezoids, a lower level primitive, may simplify a second stage of the patterning process, rasterization.

The coordinates of the convex polygons may be used to form an edge list **938** for representing each of the plurality of convex polygons. The processing of the one or more graphical objects may also include the identification of transitions at the boundaries of the one or more graphical objects or convex polygons according to a scan direction of the DMD **410**.

The non-transitory computer-readable medium may also perform the steps of storing the edge list **938** in an image processing unit **936**. The edge list **938** may be updated as further scans of the substrate **140** are completed. Scans may be completed by an optical unit or image projection system **301**. After storing the edge list **938**, the non-transitory computer-readable medium may perform the step of scanning, according to a predetermined scan direction, the plurality of convex polygons, or a portion thereof. The scanning may include scanning a portion of a convex polygon along a column. The scanning may further include scanning a portion of a convex polygon along a row. A first portion of the each of the plurality of convex polygons may be processed and analyzed. The analyzing may allow for the identification of merge locations with respect to the first portion of each of the plurality of convex polygons before merging occurs.

The non-transitory computer-readable medium may further perform the steps of determining locations at which the first selection of the plurality of convex polygons can be merged with a second selection of the plurality of convex polygons. The non-transitory computer-readable medium may contain control logic **939** for the image processing unit **936** configured to selectively merge individual convex polygons. The control logic **939** of the image processing unit **936** may be configured to synchronize operations of the plurality of convex polygons. Merging the first selection of the plurality of convex polygons with the second selection of the plurality of convex polygons may occur to reduce the number of convex polygons within the plurality of convex polygons, as well as the number of convex polygons stored within the image processing unit **936**. Merging to reduce the number of convex polygons may ease the burden and/or balance the load with respect to the storage capabilities of the image processing unit **936** or other storage device. Furthermore, the merging of the convex polygons may act to limit the loss of edge fidelity of the convex polygons. Limiting the loss of edge fidelity may preserve with a degree of exactness the edges and overall shape of edge lines as copied or reproduced with respect to the substrate **140**. The image projection system **301**, supra, may expose a substrate and deliver light to the surface of the substrate **140**. Each exposure may last approximately about 65 microseconds. During each exposure approximately 350,000 trapezoids may be generated and, therefore, processed. In order to limit the loss of edge fidelity, smaller trapezoids may be merged with larger or immediately connected trapezoids, thus easing the storage requirements of the controller **702**. The merging of trapezoids may create an error amount which may be compared against an acceptable error amount. The image data generated from the image processing unit **936** may further be stored in the image processing unit **936** or in another suitable storage facility.

FIG. **10** schematically illustrates operations of a method **1000** for tuning data for parallel image processing according to one embodiment described herein. The method **1000** generally relates to the selective merging of graphical objects, such as convex polygons, to minimize the graphical object count. Furthermore, the method **1000** generally relates to the limiting of the loss of edge fidelity of the selectively merged graphical objects. At operation **1010**, one or more graphical objects are processed to generate a plurality of convex polygons. At operation **1020**, an edge list is formed for representing each of the plurality of convex polygons. At operation **1030**, the edge list is stored in an image processing unit. At operation **1040**, a location at which a first selection of this plurality of convex polygons can be merged with a second selection of the plurality of convex polygon is determined. At operation **1050**, the first selection of the plurality of convex polygons is merged with the second selection of the plurality of convex polygons to reduce the number of convex polygon within the plurality of convex polygons stored in the image processing unit. The merging limits the loss of edge fidelity of the convex polygons. At operation **1060**, image data generated from the image processing unit is stored.

The data tuning application quickly computes and simplifies polygonal manipulations such that trapezoids and/or other convex polygons may be selectively merged. The selective merging of trapezoids may reduce the overall amount of data to be stored in the image processing unit. Further benefits may include a reduction in trapezoid count, a reduction in the amount of data to be processed, as well as a limiting of the loss of edge fidelity of the trapezoids and/or other convex polygons.

While the foregoing is directed to embodiments described herein, other and further embodiments may be devised without departing from the basic scope thereof. For example, aspects of the present disclosure may be implemented in hardware or software or in a combination of hardware and software. One embodiment described herein may be implemented as a program product for use with a computer system. The program(s) of the program product define functions of the embodiments (including the methods described herein) and can be contained on a variety of computer-readable storage media. Illustrative computer-readable storage media include, but are not limited to: (i) non-writable storage media (for example, read-only memory devices within a computer such as CD-ROM disks readable by a CD-ROM drive, flash memory, ROM chips or any type of solid-state non-volatile semiconductor memory) on which information is permanently stored; and (ii) writable storage media (for example, floppy disks within a diskette drive or hard-disk drive or any type of solid-state random-access semiconductor memory) on which alterable information is stored. Such computer-readable storage media, when carrying computer-readable instructions that direct the functions of the disclosed embodiments, are embodiments of the present disclosure.

It will be appreciated to those skilled in the art that the preceding examples are exemplary and not limiting. It is intended that all permutations, enhancements, equivalents, and improvements thereto that are apparent to those skilled in the art upon a reading of the specification and a study of the drawings are included within the true spirit and scope of the present disclosure. It is therefore intended that the following appended claims include all such modifications, permutations, and equivalents as fall within the true spirit and scope of these teachings.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for patterning a substrate using write beams and tuning data for parallel image processing, comprising:

loading mask data into a memory cell and controlling tilting of a plurality of mirrors using the mask data;

delivering light to a surface of the substrate;

processing one or more graphical objects to generate a plurality of convex polygons;

forming an edge list for representing each of the plurality of convex polygons;

storing the edge list in an image processing unit;

determining locations at which a first selection of the plurality of convex polygons can be merged with a second selection of the plurality of convex polygons;

merging the first selection of the plurality of convex polygons with the second selection of the plurality of convex polygons to reduce the number of convex polygons within the plurality of convex polygons stored in the image processing unit, wherein the merging limits the loss of edge fidelity of the convex polygons;

creating an error amount based on the merging of convex polygons and comparing the error amount against an acceptable error amount; and

storing image data generated from the image processing unit.

2. The method of claim **1**, wherein processing one or more graphical objects comprises:

identifying transitions at the boundaries of the one or more graphical objects according to a scan direction; and

partitioning the one or more graphical objects into the plurality of convex polygons.

3. The method of claim **1**, further comprising:

scanning the plurality of convex polygons according to a predetermined scan direction after storing the edge list;

processing at least a first portion of each of the plurality of convex polygons after scanning the plurality of convex polygons; and

analyzing merge locations before merging.

4. The method of claim **1**, further comprising scanning the portion of the convex polygons, wherein the scanning comprises at least one of scanning the portion of the convex polygon along a column and scanning the portion of the convex polygon along a row.

5. The method of claim **1**, wherein the merging reduces the number of convex polygons within the plurality of convex polygons.

6. The method of claim **1**, wherein the image processing unit comprises control logic configured to selectively merge individual convex polygons.

7. The method of claim **6**, wherein the control logic is configured to synchronize operations of the plurality of convex polygons.

8. A computer system for patterning a substrate using write beams and performing data tuning for parallel image processing, comprising:

a processor; and

a memory storing instructions that, when executed by the processor, cause the computer system to:

load mask data into a memory cell and control tilting of a plurality of mirrors using the mask data;

deliver light to a surface of the substrate;

process one or more graphical objects to generate a plurality of convex polygons;

form an edge list for representing each of the plurality of convex polygons;

store the edge list in an image processing unit;

determine locations at which a first selection of the plurality of convex polygons can be merged with a second selection of the plurality of convex polygons;

merge the first selection of the plurality of convex polygons with the second selection of the plurality of convex polygons to reduce the number of convex polygons within the plurality of convex polygons stored in the image processing unit, wherein the merging limits the loss of edge fidelity of the convex polygons;

create an error amount based on the merging of convex polygons and comparing the error amount against an acceptable error amount; and

store image data generated from the image processing unit.

9. The computer system of claim **8**, wherein processing one or more graphical objects comprises:

identifying transitions at the boundaries of the one or more graphical objects according to a scan direction; and partitioning the one or more graphical objects into the plurality of convex polygons.

10. The computer system of claim **8**, further comprising:

scanning the plurality of convex polygons according to a predetermined scan direction after storing the edge list;

processing at least a first portion of each of the plurality of convex polygons after scanning the plurality of convex polygons; and

analyzing merge locations before merging.

11. The computer system of claim **8**, further comprising scanning the portion of the convex polygons, wherein the scanning comprises at least one of scanning the portion of the convex polygon along a column and scanning the portion of the convex polygon along a row.

12. The computer system of claim **8**, wherein the merging reduces the number of convex polygons within the plurality of convex polygons.

13. The computer system of claim **8**, wherein the image processing unit comprises control logic configured to selectively merge individual convex polygons.

14. The computer system of claim **13**, wherein the control logic is configured to synchronize operations of the plurality of convex polygons.

15. A non-transitory computer-readable medium storing instructions that, when executed by a processor, cause a computer system to control the patterning of a substrate using write beams and to tune data for parallel image processing, by performing the steps of:

loading mask data into a memory cell and control tilting of a plurality of mirrors using the mask data;

delivering light to a surface of the substrate;

processing one or more graphical objects to generate a plurality of convex polygons;

forming an edge list for representing each of the plurality of convex polygons;

storing the edge list in an image processing unit;

determining locations at which a first selection of the plurality of convex polygons can be merged with a second selection of the plurality of convex polygons;

merging the first selection of the plurality of convex polygons with the second selection of the plurality of convex polygons to reduce the number of convex polygons within the plurality of convex polygons stored in the image processing unit, wherein the merging limits the loss of edge fidelity of the convex polygons;

creating an error amount based on the merging of convex polygons and comparing the error amount against an acceptable error amount; and

storing image data generated from the image processing unit.

16. The non-transitory computer-readable medium of claim **15**, wherein processing one or more graphical objects comprises:

identifying transitions at the boundaries of the one or more graphical objects according to a scan direction; and

partitioning the one or more graphical objects into the plurality of convex polygons.

17. The non-transitory computer-readable medium of claim **15**, further comprising:

scanning the plurality of convex polygons according to a predetermined scan direction after storing the edge list;

processing at least a first portion of each of the plurality of convex polygons after scanning the plurality of convex polygons; and

analyzing merge locations before merging.

18. The non-transitory computer-readable medium of claim **15**, further comprising scanning the portion of the convex polygons, wherein the scanning comprises at least one of scanning the portion of the convex polygon along a column and scanning the portion of the convex polygon along a row.

19. The non-transitory computer-readable medium of claim **15**, wherein the merging reduces the number of convex polygons within the plurality of convex polygons.

20. The non-transitory computer-readable medium of claim **15**, wherein the image processing unit comprises control logic configured to selectively merge individual convex polygons.

21. The non-transitory computer-readable medium of claim **20**, wherein the control logic is configured to synchronize operations of the plurality of convex polygons.

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